

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 09909 201827Z

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ACTION EUR-25

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TAGS: PFOR, UR

SUBJ: SOVIETS REACT TO NEW YORK TIMES STORY

REF: A) MOSCOW 4560; B) MOSCOW 9807

1. HEDRICK SMITH OF NEW YORK TIMES IS RIDICULED IN HEAVY-HANDED KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA ARTICLE AUG. 18 FOR "FISHING IN TROUBLES WATERS" WHILE ASSESSING US-USSR SUMMIT RESULTS. SOVIETS IRRITATED BY SMITH ASSERTION THAT CHANGE IN POLITICAL CLIMATE HAS BROUGHT OUT RUSSIAN DEMAND FOR AMERICANS GOODS AND TRAVEL TO U.S.

2. IN CONTINUING CAMPAIGN AGAINST SMITH THAT INCLUDES ATTACK IN ZHURNALIST MAGAZINE LAST DECEMBER (REFTEL A), N. GRIBACHEV SUPPOSEDLY CHOSEN TO WRITE ARTICLE BECAUSE OF FISHING EXPERTISE. AFTER SCORNING IDEA THAT RUSSIANS ANXIOUS FOR AMERICAN CIGARETS AND CHEWING GUM, AUTHOR IN ARGUEMENT STRETCHED TO BREAKING POINT CONTESTS AT LENGTH SMITH QUOTE OF UKRAINIAN FISHERMAN WHO LIONIZED "FANTASTIC" U.S. FISHING LINE CAPABLE OF SUPPORTING FISH OF MAN'S WEIGHT. SMITH'S KNOWLEDGE OF FISHING,

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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 09909 201827Z

GRIBACHEV INSISTS, IS ONLY IN USE OF CAMOUFLAGE.

3. ARTICLE DECRIMES SMITH POINT THAT DEMAND FOR U.S. CONSUMER GOODS MUCH GREATER THAN INTEREST IN POLITICAL, CULTURAL OR OTHER SUMMIT DEVELOPMENTS AND CONCLUDES, "WE'RE FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION (NOTE: PURPORTEDLY AS IN SMITH MENTION OF 'COVETED' U.S. JOURNALS) BUT NOT DISINFORMATION."

4. COMMENT: WHILE FISHING LINE ARGUMENT ENSNARLS ITSELF, ARTICLE CLEARLY AIMED AT DISCREDITING SMITH PERSONALLY IN ACCORD WITH INCREASING INDICATION OF OFFICIAL DISFAVOR AT TIME OF OVERALL BETTER TREATMENT OF AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS (REFTEL B). BASIC TACTIC REMAINS OF USING PUBLIC ATTACKS TO KEEP ACTIVE FOREIGN JOURNALISTS IN LINE.

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